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Africa Review

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25X1

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		Page	
Articles	South Africa: The United Democratic Front	1	25X1
			25X1
	Since its formation in 1983, the multiracial United Democratic Front has organized civil disobedience and protest events, including consumer and school boycotts and work stayaways, but it also has been a principal actor in the violence among black groups.		25X1
			25X1
Briefs	Zambia: Tough Economic Challenges	9	25X1
	The Gambia: Government Scandals	10	25X1

Articles have been coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Comments and queries regarding this publication may be directed to the Chief, Production Staff, Office of African and Latin American Analysis,

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ALA AR 85-024
1 November 1985

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Articles

South Africa: The United Democratic Front

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The multiracial United Democratic Front (UDF) has emerged as the leading antiapartheid force in South Africa. The organization, formed in August 1983 to oppose the new constitution that gives limited political rights to colored and Asians but excludes blacks, now claims 2 million members in an amalgam of 600 groups ranging from unions to churches to rugby clubs. Since the 1983 constitutional referendum, the UDF has organized civil disobedience and protest events, including consumer and school boycotts and work stayaways, but also has been a principal actor in the violence among blacks that has plagued the townships near Durban and in Cape Province.

UDF Organization

The confederal structure of the organization gives the UDF some strengths, but it is also a principal weakness. Affiliation with the UDF is open only to organizations, and these organizations have representation on area committees that in turn are linked to a regional council and finally to a national council. This diffuse structure allows the UDF to operate effectively at the community level, and permits a wide variety of actions. The affiliates may allow the UDF to coordinate action but they also can act independently. Because there are no clearly defined policies, individual groups are free to adopt actions as they wish.

Leadership, however, is fragmented, and there is often no one to quickly replace arrested leaders. Because leaders have been detained and organizations have been prohibited from meeting, the UDF has not been able to arrive at a broad consensus on policy. These circumstances, nevertheless, also have thwarted the development of ideological rifts.

Government Reaction

The UDF has been subjected to a continuous round of official harassment that has included detention and arrest of leaders, office raids, and banning of meetings. The crackdown on dissent that occurred in Cape Town in late October and culminated in the government's declaration of the state of emergency for the area included the arrest of virtually the entire UDF leadership in western Cape Province. The government also banned the meetings of 102 organizations, most of which are affiliated with the UDF. At one point in August, only one member of the entire UDF Executive Council nationwide was at large, and he was in hiding. Also in August, Minister of Law and Order Louis Le Grange ordered the banning of the Congress of South African Students, the UDF's largest affiliate with 40 branches throughout the country. Thirty-eight UDF leaders currently are being tried on charges of high treason.

With the recent spate of arrests in Cape Town, the government is getting close to a "de facto" banning of the organization. Government officials believe for now, in our judgment, that they can diminish the effectiveness of the organization sufficiently by using present tactics without having to risk the torrent of international criticism that would follow an outright banning. If the government institutes a full-scale crackdown on dissent, however, which we believe could come at any time, it is likely that the UDF would be banned.

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ALA AR 85-024
1 November 1985

Secret

Position on Protest Methods

The UDF leadership has made contradictory statements on the use of violence in antigovernment activity. Many believe that a public position in support of nonviolence is the only practical course if the UDF is to remain an aboveground movement. Executive Council members have repeatedly stressed the UDF's commitment to such a position. Some UDF spokesmen, including Patron Allan Boesak, Publicity Secretary Patrick Terror Lekota, and Executive Secretary Popo Molefe have emphasized that the UDF favors direct negotiations with the government and believes that issues can be resolved without bloodshed. At the same time, however, Lekota has defended attacks on black councilors as "defensive." Other leaders believe that a more militant stand is required to keep pace with the prevailing mood of blacks, and some have openly espoused revolution, leaving the door open to violence against the government, in our view. UDF official Farouk Meer of the National Indian Council (a UDF affiliate) says that, while the UDF is nonviolent, violence is the only option left when civil opposition is repressed. []

Role in Interorganizational Violence

Deep-seated ideological differences between UDF affiliates and other black organizations—particularly the Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO) and Inkatha—have been at the core of much of the black-on-black violence in Durban and in Cape Province. Some blacks suspect that South African police have operated under the cover of these rivalries to carry out attacks on their own targets in the townships. As competition among black groups for support within the communities continues, we believe that the dynamics of violence will persist and that various groups with grievances—including security forces and white vigilantes—could use these conditions to further their own aims. []

AZAPO Rivalry. In our view, disputes with AZAPO are in part a result of that organization's resentment of the UDF's quick success in attracting members and funds and in part an outgrowth of highly charged disputes over the means and ends of antigovernment action. According to the US Embassy in Pretoria, these factors, combined with longstanding personal

rivalries between leaders, led to an intense period of violence in the eastern Cape earlier this year that could reemerge at any time. []

Ideological differences between the two groups are the most obvious point of friction. AZAPO's black-consciousness roots put it at odds with the multiracial UDF, which officially believes whites should be involved in the struggle and encourages white membership. Nevertheless, reporting from our consulates in South Africa suggests that the UDF has become more black conscious over the past year; this development may intensify the rivalry over the short term as the two groups compete for members. Another difference is AZAPO's commitment to a socialist solution, while the UDF seeks to accommodate a variety of political perspectives. Finally, AZAPO believes that South African blacks must achieve liberation on their own and the UDF purposefully has sought international support and would welcome assistance in its struggle. []

Inkatha. We believe that UDF-Inkatha violence in the Durban area is a result of intense political competition, virulent UDF opposition to Inkatha leader Chief Gatsha Buthelezi—who is seen as an ally of the white regime—and resistance by some blacks to incorporation of their townships into Kwazulu. Buthelezi has blamed the UDF for much of the township violence in the area, while the UDF claims that Inkatha acts as a surrogate for the government. UDF leaders have told our Consulate in Durban that Inkatha probably was responsible for the murder in September of Victoria Mxenge, Natal UDF executive and attorney for the 16 UDF leaders on trial for treason in Durban. []

Relationship With the ANC

[] President

Botha has told parliament that the UDF is an extension of the ANC, and Chief Buthelezi has charged that the UDF acts under direct orders of the ANC. Several national UDF leaders, including copresidents Archie Gumede, Albertina Sisulu, and

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Oscar Mpetha, were associated with the ANC before it was banned in 1960, according to press reports. ANC symbols are frequently visible at UDF functions. []

There is wide speculation, according to the US Consulate in Durban, that the UDF is using ANC funds to build its strength within South Africa. []

[] Victoria Mxenge was believed to have been a conduit for ANC money, although she had denied any association with the outlawed group. In any case, the US Embassy in Pretoria points out that the UDF appears to have abundant funds of which the source is unknown, but ties to the ANC have not been established. []

A UDF-ANC link, although not evident, is still possible. Like the ANC, many of the major UDF organizations endorse the Freedom Charter—the 1955 document calling for a nondiscriminatory, democratic South Africa—and both organizations can accommodate a variety of ideologies. Although a major difference seems to exist between the two on the use of violence, the UDF's rejection of violence is equivocal. We believe, therefore, that the ANC and most groups belonging to the UDF probably are philosophically compatible. []

Outlook

The government will continue its attempts to suppress UDF activity by arresting leaders and banning meetings. We believe the stringent restrictions placed on a UDF rally in mid-October in the western Cape are likely to be repeated—if rallies are permitted at all. The government also will use such tactics as arrests of leaders and confiscation of membership lists, dues records, and other UDF documents. Arson attacks on UDF offices, for which white vigilante groups have claimed responsibility in the past, are also likely to be repeated. []

We believe that the government probably will avoid an outright ban of the UDF as long as possible. The Botha government probably wishes to avoid additional international criticism at a time when it is trying to reschedule \$14 billion in external debt. Press reports of bankers' uneasiness about the South African political situation may be enough to discourage

banning the UDF entirely over the near term. We believe, however, that repeated allegations that the UDF is an arm of the ANC would suggest that Botha has positioned himself to ban the organization whenever he deems the time right. If the unrest escalates substantially, he probably would not wait for the debt talks to conclude. In this case, he would institute harsh repressive measures that would include making membership in the UDF illegal. []

Meanwhile, we believe the UDF itself will become increasingly militant. Reporting from our consulates in Johannesburg and Cape Town, for example, indicates that, as the UDF has absorbed local groups, it increasingly is becoming a focal point for antigovernment anger. Also, despite the UDF's official endorsement of the principle of negotiations with the government, it has refused to join—or to encourage member groups to participate in—the Convention Alliance, an effort led by the Progressive Federal Party and Inkatha to work for a national convention to decide South Africa's future. Furthermore, although little is known about the way the UDF functions nationwide, the fact that it has continued to prosper in spite of widespread arrests of its leaders suggests a level of organization and support that will not be easily eradicated. []

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Africa Briefs

Zambia

Tough Economic Challenges [REDACTED]

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President Kaunda's efforts to carry out politically sensitive and long overdue economic reforms will take him through some rough political waters in the coming months. The government wants to reorient the faltering economy around an agricultural base and reduce reliance on the depressed copper mining industry. One of Kaunda's new initiatives may be to cut spending by reducing the civil service, possibly by as many as 5,000 people, [REDACTED]

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In an effort to pave the way for a new IMF agreement, Lusaka already has introduced a foreign exchange auction system that allows market forces to determine the value of the kwacha and the distribution of foreign exchange. It also has reduced subsidies on corn to increase incentives to farmers and to reduce imports. The reduction in corn subsidies produced an immediate price increase of 40 percent for corn meal—the principal food staple—while the auction system so far has led to a devaluation of almost 70 percent. The value of the kwacha is now about 14 cents. [REDACTED]

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Labor unions, lower military ranks, and the general public are grumbling about the devaluation and the higher corn prices, and, [REDACTED] farmers are upset over a profit squeeze. Police broke up a demonstration in October by striking taxi drivers in Lusaka, who were protesting a 100-percent increase in gasoline prices. There have also been demonstrations by individual groups of mineworkers against price increases, and the mineworkers union is planning a work slowdown as another protest move, [REDACTED]

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Kaunda stands to lose some popular support over the reforms, but we do not foresee a serious threat to his staying in power at this time. Wildcat strikes are possible over the next several months, although either strong coercive action or concessions by the government may avert such actions. We believe senior military officers will back the regime, although some grumbling in the ranks will continue. Military support could erode, however, if Kaunda is repeatedly forced to call out the troops to put down civil disturbances. [REDACTED]

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Public criticism of the Jawara regime has increased in the past several weeks as a broad cross section of the ruling elite has been implicated in charges of corruption. Nearly \$1.4 million has disappeared from the Department of Cooperatives funds and some 80 officials are under arrest. Investigations are under way into the activities of the Central Bank and several other branches of the government. Meanwhile, the arrest of the country's senior air controller for embezzlement may close Banjul Airport as the tourist season opens.

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With foreign reserves exhausted, inflation increasing, and the prospect of an indefinite shortage of food and fuel, The Gambia's economic outlook is bleak. The opposition National Congress Party has denounced the government's mismanagement of the economy and corruption at well-attended public meetings over the past month, according to US Embassy reporting. Although the Embassy doubts that serious disorders will break out soon, outspoken discontent may encourage coup plotting. Senegal continues to station a security force in The Gambia, fearing Libyan-backed activity, according to US officials.

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